

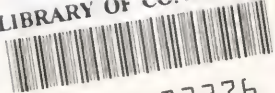
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REMINISCENCES
OF THE
Chattanooga Campaign.

A Paper Read at the Reunion of Company B,
Fortieth Ohio Volunteer Infantry, at
Xenia, O., August 22, 1894,

BY

SERGEANT ISAAC C. DOAN.

RICHMOND, IND.:
PRINTED AT J. M. COE'S PRINTERY,
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REMINISCENCES.

THE CHATTANOOGA CAMPAIGN.

ON a balmy autumn day—September 18th, 1863, while the Chattanooga Valley lay nestled within its rugged mountain borders, bathed in the mellow rays of the Southern sun, the First Brigade, First Division of the Reserve Corps, broke camp near Crawfish Springs, and moved out along the Ringgold road.

This brigade was composed of the Fortieth Ohio, Eighty-fourth Indiana, Ninety-sixth and One Hundred-and-fifteenth Illinois Infantry.

Late in the afternoon, just as the head of the column reached Chickamauga River, the sharp crack of a rebel picket gun rang out upon the air. The column halted, and almost immediately we saw a mounted officer riding rapidly toward us from the front, the ranks opening at his approach. As he reached our company (B, Fortieth O. V. I.) he spoke to our Captain who at once gave the order: "Company B, forward—double quick—march!"

Upon reaching the head of the column we saw the dead body of a Union soldier, lying upon his face, his life-blood mingling with the dust of the road.

We crossed the stream and deployed as skirmishers, while on our right was deployed a company of the Ninety-sixth Illinois. We moved cautiously through the thicket until we reached a fence beyond which was an open field with stumps every few minutes, from behind which the Johnnies were firing salutes in honor of our arrival. We halted awhile at the fence and returned their compliments, when we were ordered to advance.

We cleared the low fence at a bound, and made a rush for the rebel line of skirmishers, who gave a parting volley and showed us their gray backs, while we gave them every encouragement to go. We were then halted and lay down while one of our batteries played over our heads, shelling the opposite woods.

As it was nearly dark the firing soon ceased. I lay, for several hours, by the stump which formed my temporary fortress, occasionally hearing faint noises, as of some one moving stealthily.

I kept awake! About midnight it grew still and I began to be decidedly lonesome and crept over to a stump where I had seen a comrade before it became dark—he was *gone*. The skirmishers had been withdrawn silently, and I had been missed in the darkness, and was out in the enemy's country all alone.

I went back for reinforcements—cautiously, however, being fully alive to the danger of being taken for a rebel, and of falling a victim to mistaken identity. I had only gone a few steps when I heard the cocking of a gun and the words “Haldt, who gooms dere.” I sung out “Fortieth Ohio,” without delay, for those Dutchmen of the Ninety-sixth Illinois had the reputation of shooting and *then* saying halt.

I am glad they reversed the order in this instance. I was directed to advance, and told that I would find Company B on their left: the companies having been retired a few paces and closed upon the left, which brought the Ninety-sixth boys in rear of my position.

About daylight we were ordered back to the brigade, then more than a mile in our rear. This was our first taste of the great battle of Chickamauga, of which we were destined to draw a full ration a little later. It is significant that the Indian name “Chickamauga” means “river of death.”

The next day we moved out in two lines of battle and encountered the enemy at the same point. Our regiment, forming the left wing of the front line, took position behind the fence I have before mentioned, and began a musketry duel with the rebels, who were behind the fence on the opposite side of the field. We fought there for an hour or two: the bullets rattling against the fence, knocking the dust into our eyes and making themselves generally disagreeable. I always like a bullet better when it is lying still, or going the other way. Several of our company were wounded: none I think were killed at this point. Our Captain was wounded in the foot, and removed from the field early in the action, leaving our Second Lieutenant in command of the company, who directed me to take charge of the left flank, he remaining near the right of the company. This gave me the privilege of standing up and overlooking the work, instead of hiding behind the bottom rail of the fence as I felt very much like doing.

Our company formed the extreme left of the line and in low ground, and the line passing over a small hill we could not see the right of the regiment.

After the fight had been going on for an hour or two, the rebels in our front raised a yell and came tearing over the fence and across the field toward us. This seemed to be our opportunity, and we commenced issuing them rations of lead as fast as possible. When looking to the

right we saw our whole line on a regular stampede—disappearing into the woods as if by magic. Four or five of us took trees and gave them another round “for luck,” for we agreed that it was a shame to run just as we had a chance to do some execution. We were rewarded by a withering cross-fire from right and left, and looking around we saw the rebels bearing down upon both sides of us. We were being enclosed as in the jaws of death. The regiment had been flanked upon the right. A movement that was concealed from us by the intervening hill.

We *went right away from there*. We went through the Chickamauga with neatness and despatch.

As we emerged from the bushes on the west bank, we came upon the One Hundred-and-fifteenth Illinois, drawn up in line, guns at a ready, a thousand eager fingers trembling upon the triggers. We dropped and crawled between their legs, and while we were struggling through, the whole line opened fire with a terrific volley. Had we been a moment later we would have got the full benefit of that volley, and this paper would never have been written.

You may be sorry before I get through, but I’m glad I got through that line as soon as I did.

Our line re-formed, but the whole brigade was forced to fall back, both flanks having been turned by a greatly superior force. The retreat was in good order, every foot of ground being contested for about two miles, when we were reinforced by the Second Brigade and stayed the tide until dark. We lay on our arms all that night. Next morning we felt for the enemy all over the ground traversed by our forces the day before: but he had vanished from our front. Gone to swell the mass that was being formed with the intention of crushing that immortal hero, Geo. H. Thomas.

All that day we heard the stertorous breathing of a terrible battle, which was raging away to our right rear. About noon we took up our line of march in a southwesterly direction, in a direct line for the point where the clamor of war was most incessant. We moved with great celerity through the forest and across the farms. No fences barred our progress, for the presence of vast armies for several days had rendered the country defenseless.

We soon came across signs of recent conflict, disabled cannon, dead horses, mangled corpses, in both blue and gray, and all the bloody paraphernalia of cruel war. Many of the dead were torn and blackened and burned by bursting shell until the ghastly fragments were indescribably shocking, and not at all calculated to encourage soldiers who knew they were just going into battle, and were candidates for a similar fate, with reasonable prospects of being elected. The hardest part of a battle

is going into it. Much worse than going out. I think any thoughtful man upon going into battle, must go with a deadly sadness at his heart. I have seen the thoughtless and fool-hardy go in with a laugh and jest upon their lips, but they were not nearly so apt to stand fire as those who advanced with pale cheeks and serious aspect, for these had anticipated the danger and braced their nerves to meet it, and the shock of battle did not come to them as a surprise.

Well, we were going into one of the most terrible battles of modern times, and many of us began to realize it by this time. Off to the south we could see the dense smoke of the battle, as well as hear the crashing of musketry and the booming of artillery, and the shot and shell began to pay their respects to us in a "way we despired."

We were hurried along the rear of the battle line toward the right of Gen. Thomas' command, which was sorely pressed.

The firing of the musketry was so incessant that the ear could not distinguish the separate discharges. Imagine a few hundred gushers, of the gas well variety, all turned loose at once, and you will have as good an illustration as you are likely to get in time of peace.

We were not allowed time to contemplate the battle as spectators. Brannon's division, holding the right, was being flanked by Longstreet's ten fresh brigades.

Already the troops on Brannon's right were overwhelmed, and the enemy, flushed with victory, was charging down upon the rear of his position, when our two brigades were hurled into the "imminent deadly breach."

It would seem as though every man realized that the fate of the array depended upon this charge, and with the energy of desperation and "a fury born of the impending peril, we charged the enemy," and though he "welcomed us with bloody hands to hospitable graves," we faltered not, until we had driven him back and formed our line extending along "Horse Shoe Ridge"—a name rendered historic by the carnage of that terrible Sunday afternoon, September 20th, 1863.

We were in two lines of battle, while the enemy was massed ten lines deep in our front, and this heavy force was thrown against our slender lines, in charge after charge of inconceivable fury. And more than once during the afternoon our front line was driven back from the crest of the ridge, over the rear line which was lying some thirty yards down the northern slope, with bayonets fixed and "blood in their eye," and as soon as the front line passed over them, they would leap to their feet, and with a yell and murderous volley, right in the teeth of the rebel horde, would hurl them back as quickly as they came, regain the vantage

ground upon the ridge, while the other line would lie down and hold themselves in readiness to return the compliment.

In this way, in a very little while, the whole hillside was thickly carpeted with the dead and dying of both armies. The blue and the gray intermingled in a frightful mixture of writhing agony and stark staring death.

We soon, however, had our line firmly established upon the ridge, and all the legions of Satan failed to prevail against us; so that night found us still in triumphant possession of it, but at what a fearful cost.

The official report places the loss of our two brigades, in this action, from 2:00 P. M. until dark, at 44 per cent.

These two small figures contain a pathos which my pen has no power to portray. We knew, however, that the enemy must have lost more men, as their ten lines furnished more food for powder than our two.

If we overshot the front line our bullets had some chance of taking effect later on. And thus the massing of the enemy which would have told with fearful effect upon us, had they succeeded in breaking through our lines, became a source of heavy loss to them under the circumstances.

I have always been thankful that there was no Joshua present to stay the downward course of the sun that day. For night found us with empty cartridge boxes, though many had borrowed largely from the boxes of the unresisting dead, who had no further use for them.

I fired eighty rounds from my breech-loading carbine, and the cartridge chamber became so hot that I could not bear my hand upon it, and I was actually afraid the thing would shoot back in my face when I would put in a new cartridge.

Night put an end to the great battle of Chickamauga. At once a defeat and victory for the Union army. A defeat, because we were compelled to fall back to prevent being surrounded by superior numbers, leaving the field, our dead, and many of our desperately wounded to the tender mercies of the most cruel enemy of modern times. A victory, in that Chickamauga, the bone of contention, remained in our hands.

In good order we marched back to Rossville, about half way from the battle-field to Chattanooga.

I had reason to be thankful for the moderation of the pace, for one of my shins had been used as a back-stop for an almost spent grape shot, and I became very lame before reaching our place of bivouac. I was a cripple for several days, and my limb bore a black spot for a month, but no pension was the result. It did not even leave an honorable scar.

That night we took position on Missionary Ridge and awaited the

approach of the enemy, which was distinguished for that caution with which the burned child approaches the fire. For they did not strike our lines until about 3:00 P. M. next day, and then not hard enough to drive in our pickets. Monday night, about midnight, we silently moved down off the ridge and took position in hastily constructed earthworks immediately around Chattanooga, leaving our picket line at the foot of the ridge on the outside, to throw dust—or something—in the eyes of the rebels as they felt for our position in the night. Next morning, seeing the crest of the ridge clear, they moved suddenly upon our pickets and easily gobbled them; as they had no chance for speedy retreat up the steep side of the ridge. This is one of the saddest of the fortunes of war—a picket line being abandoned, to certain capture, as a vicarious sacrifice to secure the safety of an army. Our regiment had thirty-six men and officers—the remnant of Company H—taken in on this occasion, and they were given the freedom of the stockade prison—inside the “dead line”—at Andersonville, where they spent the winter in the full enjoyment of the luxuries of that famous place of entertainment provided for them by fiends in human form, whose wanton cruelty has made them the standing disgrace of the century in which they lived, whose inhumanity has no parallel in civilized history, and is not exceeded in the annals of *savage* warfare. Our boys found the kind attentions and high living so enervating as to be positively unhealthy, for the following spring only fifteen of them left it alive, and they were walking skeletons, half clothed in miserable rags.

On the 22d our brigade took position on Moccasin Point, on the north bank of the Tennessee River, immediately opposite the frowning brow of Lookout Mountain, where we guarded the river front and were at liberty to contemplate the rare beauty of this magnificent specimen of mountain scenery. Two miles in height of mountain slope! clad in the many colored robe of autumn; its base laved by the pellucid Tennessee. The songs of innumerable birds mingling with the rippling of the waters in a gentle roundelay—punctuated at intervals by the staccato notes of the festive rebel gun—followed by the not-to-gentle dropping of an ounce of lead uncomfortably near the venturesome Yank who protruded his head beyond the bushes in order to enjoy the sylvan scene: reminding him that there is no rose without its thorn.

This was starvation camp. For a full month we were on less than quarter rations, and the normal condition of the stomach was ravenous. We soon cleaned the cornfield down to the last sprouted nubbin on the ground.

After I had been hungry for about two weeks, I struck a teamster, who had some corn for his mules; and begged him for an ear. He

declined as the mules were over-worked, hauling our rations over sixty miles of mountain road. They were daily dying by scores, and there must be no lack of rations for those that were still able to pull.

It was easier for a hungry soldier to pull a trigger, than for hungry mules to pull a wagon load. My judgment accepted his reasoning, but my appetite was not so easily convinced—so I bribed him with ten cents to look the other way while I stole an ear. I ate it raw. It was good enough that way, and I wasn't proud.

I hope the mules enjoyed what was left, as well as I enjoyed that ear.

I have seen the boys dig the grains of corn from the stiff mud where the mules had fed, and rubbing the mud off, eat them without parching. They had the best of seasoning, a good appetite. We often thought with the poet:

“The melancholy days have come, the saddest of the year.”

On the 27th of October we were ordered down to Brown's Ferry to co-operate with a force who, before daylight that morning, had glided down the river in a fleet of boats—rounding Moccasin Point, and slipping past the rebel pickets without disturbing their rest, effected a landing at the Ferry, and constructed a pontoon bridge on which we crossed.

Here we waited, to hail the approach of, and smooth the way for, General Hooker, who was moving up from Bridgeport, Alabama, with the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps, driving the rebels out of the valley south of the river, thus shortening our cracker line to twenty-two miles.

We lay guarding the approach to the Ferry; and soon the Veterans from the Army of the Potomac began to file past. At this the battery of twenty pounders on Lookout opened fire and rained their misshapen fragments of iron around us in a very intrusive manner.

To be sure they were aimed at Hooker's men, and not at us, who were lying down; and if any of us were hit it should not count. But unfortunately it did count with fatal effect to many a brave comrade.

The only sort of protection in our line was a large white-oak tree, some distance to the right of our company, and I viewed with envy two soldiers sitting on the safe side of that tree.

I very soon ceased to grudge them the position; for a shell burst close beside them, a piece struck a gun, drove the breech pin through the knee of one of them, and sent the naked barrel humming over our heads. A large fragment struck the other man, tearing his arm off at the shoulder, causing his death in about twenty minutes.

I was again reminded that there is no safe place in a battle. Presence of mind is not so good as absence of body.

This movement brought us full rations whereat we greatly rejoiced. We returned to our old quarters on Moccasin Point, and my bunk mate

and I slept for the second night in a house that we had just spent a month in building. It consisted of pine poles driven into the ground to form a storkade pen about six feet square, thatched with pine-feathers. A luxurions bed of poles attached to the wall, padded with a feather bed—(pine-feathers). A regular stone fire-place, with mud and stick chimney. The roof consisted of the two sections of a dog tent.

Our kit of tools was composed of a hatchet, that wasn't sharp from one nick to another. I hope I shall have your sympathy when I say, that we were ordered down the river next day and never saw that dandy soldiers' rest again.

We next went into camp in Nickajack Cove—about two miles south of Shell-Mound, a station on the Nashville & Chattanooga Rail Road, where we built log cabins and again prepared our winter quarters.

Not far from this camp are several large caves. One is known as Murrell's cave, supposed to have been one of the hiding places of the celebrated "Land Pirate," John A. Murrell, who for years scourged this part of Tennessee.

A party of us visited this cave, found it for the most part a narrow tunnel through which flowed a shallow stream in which we had to wade a portion of the way—occasionally widening into chambers, here and there branching into lateral passages that wandered off into the vague and shadowy regions of the dark. Two of us turned back before the rest of the party, and as my comrade carried our only candle, I did not notice how short it was—until the others were beyond ear shot—when we made the startling discovery that we had not more than half enough to light us out of the cave. We made all the haste, consistent with the state of the roads and the preservation of our flickering light. But when we were yet some two hundred yards from the mouth of the cave the last drop of tallow was exhausted, and we looked upon that expiring dip, as a man might gaze upon the dying face of a friend. For it left us in total if not outer darkness.

We read of a darkness that once fell upon Egypt which was so thick that it could be felt. Well I felt this darkness in my very soul.

We dare not move for fear of following some lateral passage and getting out of the usual line of travel or of stumbling into some pitfall in which the cave abounded. How long we stood there I know not. Long enough to indulge in some very unpleasant conjectures that the rest of the party might run out of light and not be able to return to us, or returning take some other route and "pass by on the other side." Long enough to feel convinced that the Scripture which says, "Men love darkness rather than light" had no application to us. Long enough to remember all the stories we had ever heard of people lost in these caves,

until starvation found them and claimed them for its own. After we had become thoroughly uneasy, we heard another party coming in, making the usual lot of noise, and it was only by the most diligent and vigorous use of our lungs that we got them to come to our assistance, for they had actually turned and started out when they happened to get still enough to distinguish our shouts from the roaring in their own heads.

On emerging from the cave we procured a supply of candles and started after our comrades who, just as we reached the entrance, appeared, muddy and panting, with about a half an inch of candle in the party.

They were a little wiser than we were—about three-fourths an inch.

Under the mountain on the west of our camp Nickajack, was Nickajack cave, the largest in this region. Upon the mountain above is the point where Georgia and Alabama join upon the south line of Tennessee. So that within the darksome winding passages of the cavern, you can become a tenant at will, of either of the three states. A good place to dodge the Sheriff. The question of jurisdiction would be a perplexing one and the dodger would have ample opportunity for keeping shady.

No wonder the highwayman, Murrell, had a fancy for this neighborhood.

About a dozen of us got leave of absence for a day, provided ourselves with candles, provisions and hatchets, and set out for this cave. Near its mouth was an old saltpetre manufactory, dismantled by the rebels when compelled to abandon it. The nitre was obtained from a brown earth brought from the cave—said to be very rich. This cave is provided with the inevitable stream of water running through it, and the obvious inference is that this is the active agent in producing the cave,—the stream providing itself a channel through the heart of the mountain by finding and dissolving out the softer portions. We entered a long flat boat and were wafted by push poles some half mile into the cave where we found our stream issuing from beneath some rocks too low for the boat to pass under. We accordingly landed and began such an exploration as our limited time would allow. The cavity divides and subdivides into a vast number of passages which cross and recross each other, forming a net work of dark alleys that are very bewildering. Some of them are said to be over five miles in length.

We selected one and followed it to the end, marking with our hatchets each branch or cross road—so that we might return the same way without getting lost. Judging by the time consumed we must have traveled about three miles. In places the ceiling came so low that we had to lie down and walk like a snake a short distance, emerging into a vast hall, perhaps fifty by two hundred feet and from ten to thirty feet

high. The countless beads of moisture hanging from the stone ceiling would flash back our lights with a sparkle suggestive of a cave of diamonds.

Our route alternated between narrow winding passages and immense auditoriums—where an ordinary tone would be exaggerated into a roar. In many of these the ceiling was hung with stalactites, resembling an inverted forest, varying from the smallest quill-like pendant—through all gradations of size to those that would weigh hundreds of pounds, which when struck sharply with a hammer would sing out in tones like a Cathedral bell.

I gathered a fine stalactite about the size and length of an ordinary lead pencil, a perfect cylinder in shape, pure white and hollow for half its length. I tried hard to preserve it, but it was very frail and did not survive the fortunes of war.

We arrived at the end of our passage about noon, and there we ate our dinner in a magnificent stone dining hall, in which a regiment could eat without crowding. It was shady and cool.

Not far from where we dined was bat headquarters, where about a bushel of these nocturnal birds had their rendezvous. Some were hanging to the ceiling, others hanging to them, and others to them, &c., an inverted cone of acro-bats.

We took a can, we had just emptied of peaches, and filled it with bats and took them into camp as living witnesses of our visit to their home. The first and last time I was ever engaged in the canning of meats.

And now we turn our faces toward the outer world. We turn our backs upon the weird shadows, the damps and chills, the hanging forests of stalactite creeping down slowly and surely, their brethren of the stalagmite persuasion as slowly and surely creeping up; promising a meeting which we cannot stay to witness. Leave behind us all the grandeurs of the cavern, both brilliant and gloomy. Leave them in their dungeon, to their "ways that are dark," and turn toward the gladsome sunshine. To the world of light and life and beauty.

Never before did the day burst upon me with such splendor. Emerging suddenly from our six hours of constant groping among the shadows of old night, and of wrestling with the powers of darkness, into the golden glory of a Southern day; the brightness exaggerated by the contrast, almost blinded us—and I realized, as never before, how blind we are to the beauty and grandeur of this old world of ours. Accustomed to appropriate it as a matter of course, we fail to appreciate our priceless heritage. This warm-hearted mother earth which not only nurtures us, but bears upon and within her bosom the countless millions of extinct forms, which have been used as stepping-stones along the route through

all the ages leading up to us—and of all the innumerable multitude, both living and dead, she crowns us King.

Let us justify her preference by opening the records that she holds for our inspection, and reading the story of life. The road may be rough, and the way may be long, but we shall reap if we faint not. We cannot fail of our reward, but shall gather of the treasures of knowledge, which science is ever ready to bestow upon her devotees.

Let her lead us down into the catacombs of the buried nations that have preceded us; interpret for us the hand-writing upon the tomb stones, and show us the fossil foot-prints of the Great Creator.

She will teach us nothing but God's truth. Under her guidance we shall find "tongues in trees, sermons in stones, books in the running brooks, and good in everything."

Under her interpretation the "mountains and the hills shall break forth before us into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

Let us now return from a contemplation of the inner treasures of earth to the struggle for existence upon its surface.

On the morning of November 24th, 1863, we were again in front of Lookout mountain. I wonder if you are as tired of it as I was.

We crossed Lookout creek upon a rude bridge composed of two logs laid across and floored with fence rails, the water of the rapid mountain stream boiling under the logs and gurgling among the rails—and ran our line by the right flank up the mountain side.

Imagine a cloud-capped fortress with an army encamped upon its summit and another army climbing its rugged slope. Holding in one hand the trusty musket and with the other grasping bush, tree, rock, any thing that will assist the almost impossible ascent. Undismayed by the herculean task before them, undaunted by rebel yells above them, unmappalled by the messengers of death that crash and howl about them, the blue line creeps up and up and up, until the cloud receives them out of sight, until the blue mingles with the gray in deadly conflict,—when the cloud is rendered vocal with the thunder of war, and such a storm cloud rages about the rocky coronet of old Lookout as earth has seldom witnessed.

When our right flank reached the base of perpendicular rock which forms the crown of this monarch of East Tennessee, we faced to the front and swept the slope to the northeast, descending into ravines that furrow the slope, climbing the opposite bank with infinite labor.

We make up for lack of speed, with yells, while the opposite mountain sends back the echoing battle cry, until the rebels afterwards captured said they thought there was a million of us.

And so we charged the main works at "Whitehouse farm." The rebels driven from the slope, here rallied, and stubbornly contested our advance. From the top they dropped their bullets among us. The artillery upon the summit sent their iron missiles screaming over us and growled above our heads in impotent fury at their inability to depress their muzzles so as to get our range. But we took the works on the run; and in all, bagged over 2,000 prisoners. Down to the left and front was a redoubt that was not carried with the rest of the works, owing to a deep ravine intervening, and we began indulging in some musketry practice upon the inmates which they were reciprocating in kind, when our Major, Acton, stepped down into the ditch where I was kneeling and proposed making an assault upon them. His light blue overcoat presented a conspicuous mark; and I could hear the cruel zip of the bullets that sought his life; and pulling his coat told him to get down. At this instant I heard the fierce whack of the bullet that pierced his heroic heart. He threw up his hands, and his cry of mortal anguish rings in my memory still. I sprang to my feet and caught him in my arms, easing him down; as his body sank upon my knee, I felt his form quiver and become rigid in the death agony, and saw his face receive the seal of the king of terrors. There fell a true hero. Obedience to duty was his watchword.

He had lived a noble life, and died an honorable death, and fairly won his promotion at the hands of our Supreme Commander.

About 4 P. M. we were relieved by the rear line who drove the rebels on past the Whitehouse, into the timber beyond, and there kept up a heavy skirmish firing half the night. Meantime we prepared a sumptuous repast of bacon and hard-tack—coffee was barred—some of the boys lighted fires, but quickly the order came "Fires out!" and they were encouraged to prompt obedience by the dropping shot, which were attracted by the light, gleaming through occasional rifts in the cloud.

We lay that night on the bleak mountain side, some 1500 feet above the surface of the Tennessee; subject to the loving ministrations of a driving sleet, which, carried as it was on a wind with forty miles of clear sweep, felt sharp as needles to our faces. Happy were they who had not left their blankets at the foot of the mountain.

Next morning we were aroused early and ordered to get breakfast. Company B being informed that to it had been awarded the post of honor of leading the forlorn hope up the Summertown road, a narrow road cut through the rock leading to the top of the mountain, which would admit about four men abreast, and we figured that as we marched up, in the face of a desperate enemy, it would probably use up the last man of our company before a landing could be effected. Under the protecting wing of a friendly cloud we built fires and made coffee, of which we stood in

sore need, for, sore from yesterday's exertions, shivering in our breezy breakfast hall, as the chill gray dawn crept over us, and in the absence of the enthusiasm of the active assault, the prospect before us was anything but encouraging.

Just as we finished breakfast the cloud rolled away, and the sun peering over the smoky mountains of North Carolina, gilded our mountain top.

My first thought was "sharp shooters," and glancing up at the top from whence the shots might be expected, I saw a little squad at the extreme point, unfurling a flag. With breathless interest I watched the opening folds of that flag, when out upon the wind floated the grandest national standard that ever flapped in any breeze under the shining sun. That emblem dearest to every loyal American heart: the glorious Star Spangled Banner!

I lifted up my voice and yelled. At the same time the whole mountain side resounded with huzzahs of joy and triumph. The one hundred thousand veterans in the Chattanooga Valley sent back the answer like a mighty echo, and there went up, tossed from crest to crest, and mountain top to mountain top, a tremendous Yankee shout of victory, proclaiming in thunder tones the triumph of "the battle above the clouds!"

The whole situation had experienced a change. The sharp-shooters were gone. We were relieved from that Summertown road business, and we held the key to the rebel position in front of Chattanooga.

It is no derogation to the manhood of soldiers whose valor had been fully proved, to say, that the tears of joy coursed down over many a war-worn face. With surprising alacrity we were in line of march, moving around and down the eastern slope, our minds attuned to the enjoyment of the most picturesque view I ever beheld.

Before us lay the vast amphitheatre of the Chattanooga Valley. The broad shining river curving around the north of the town, flashing the sunlight from its bosom as it came, swept down until it struck the bed rock beneath our feet, where turning sharply to the right it swept between the cliff and the great toe of Moccasin Point, then turning abruptly to the north, bathing the bottom of the gigantic foot as it went, turned the mighty heel at Waldron Ridge.

The east and south bounded by the majestic crescent of Missionary Ridge, buttressed upon the west by the cloud-hung battlements of Look-out Mountain, clad in the variegated paraphernalia of autumn foliage; the whole softly illuminated by the mellow radiance of an Indian summer day, presented a picture that may be treasured in the memory as one of nature's masterpieces.

As we crossed the valley we had the pleasure of witnessing the magnificent charge of the center as it moved out from the line of Orchard Knob, crossed the intervening plain, flowed with a resistless tide over the rifle pits at the foot of the ridge, and then, without orders, every man his own commander, surged like a huge swarm of blue flies up the rugged side of Missionary Ridge, while the half a hundred rebel cannon bellowed overhead, frescoing the air with the smoke of bursting shells. But up they went hurling the rebels from their vantage ground upon the crest, and turning his own cannon upon him "sped the parting guest," stamping out the last vestige of rebel claim to the Chattanooga Valley, and securing to the Union army permanent possession of this great "gateway to Georgia."





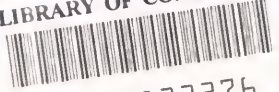
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